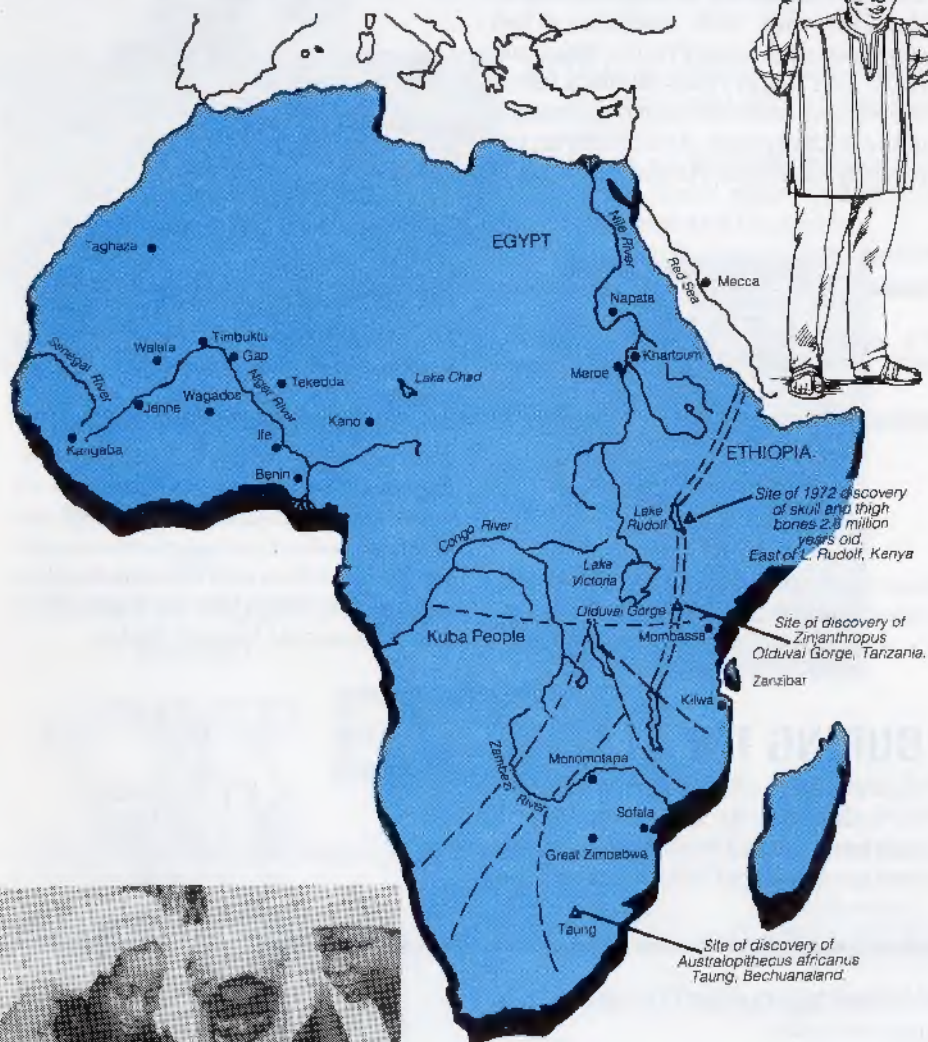




THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND ITS PEOPLE



A Study Guide For Teachers



A reading class involving mother, son, teacher, and monitor in Zaria, Northern Nigeria.

Africa is the birthplace of civilization. Archaeologists have found the remains of early humans in Tanzania, Kenya and in South Africa. These and other finds indicate that mankind had its beginning on the world's second largest continent.

Throughout the centuries, Africa has given birth to many great civilizations such as Egypt, where early Egyptians built the pyramids.

Despite all of this, for centuries there were many myths about Africa being an "uncivilized" and "primitive" place. These myths were kept alive by, for example, *Tarzan* movies which depicted Africa as one big jungle and the African people as a group of Black savages. Africa was called the "Dark Continent" as if there were something mysterious and evil about it, when in fact Africa is a place of great wonders and great diversity.

Africa is the second largest continent and home to about 10% of the world's population. Located south of Europe, Africa is bordered to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by the Indian Ocean, and is made up of 53 countries including the island of Madagascar.

Africa is far from being one big jungle; but rather, is made up of tropi-

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cal rain forests near the equator; grassy plains, or savannas; deserts—most notably, the Sahara, the largest desert in the world; and snow-capped mountains such as its highest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro (kil-uh-muhn-JAHR-oh) in northeastern Tanzania (tan-zuh-NEE-uh). Africa is also known for its great rivers, one of which is the longest river in the world: the 4000-mile-long Nile River. This geographical diversity yields a variety of plant and animal life, as well as natural resources such as iron ore, copper, gold, and diamonds.

Africa is also home to many different peoples with different cultures: Arabs, people of European descent, and Blacks—among whom there are many different ethnic groups such as the Masai (mah-SIGH), the Twa, also known as Pygmies, and the Zulus. Given this racial and ethnic diversity it is not surprising, then, that there are over a thousand languages spoken in Africa.

One of the gems of Africa's cultural diversity that is highly-prized around the world is African art. This is the traditional art of Black Africans and includes masks and figures made of wood, gold, clay, shells, and other materials. They are used for religious ceremonies, as well as decorative art as found, for example, in everyday utensils such as bowls.

Given its enormous size, its wealth of natural resources, and the diversity of its geography and its people, Africa is clearly anything but a "Dark Continent." Indeed, if Africa ever had any dark days it was when millions of Black Africans were taken away from their homeland and subjected to slavery in the United States and other countries. Another dark time was during the period of colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries when countries including France, England, Italy, and Spain ruled all but a few of the African countries until the middle of the 20th century. And of course, the country of South Africa's system of

racial injustice, known as apartheid, represents another dark day in the life of the African continent and its people.



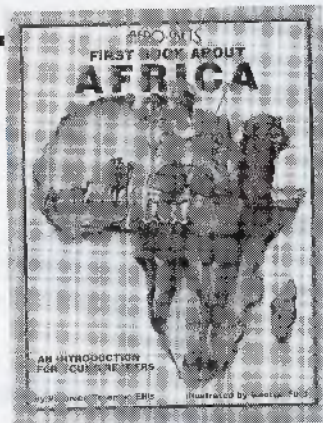
Chi Wara antelope headdress
Bambara, Mali
painted wood

BEFORE THE READING

Explain to your students that the African continent and its people have been the subject of many negative myths.

Explain to them that in truth, Africa has made great contributions to the world and is a continent of great wonders and diversity.

Explain to them that the purpose of books such as *Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa* is to increase their knowledge about Africa's history, its geography, and its people, and thereby enrich their lives.



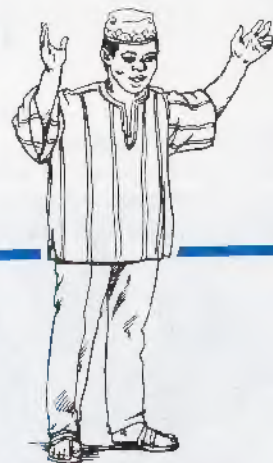
DURING THE READING

Make a large map of Africa available to your students and using colorful markers, mark the countries, places, and geographical features mentioned in the book.

AFTER THE READING

Discuss with your students the myths versus the realities about the African continent and its people.

Make a large world map available to your students. After identifying all of the continents, cut them all out and superimpose them one by one of Africa so that your students can see how large Africa is in relation to other continents. Then do the same with the continental United States.



Ask your students the following questions:

1. What topics were covered in the book?
2. Of all the topics, which one was the most interesting to you? Why?
3. What are some of the most important facts about the continent of Africa? (Possible answers include: its enormous size; its natural resources; its geographical diversity; the fact that it is where human beings began.)
4. What are some of the most important facts about the people of Africa? (Possible answers include: the greatness of its early civilizations; the racial and ethnic diversity.)

NEW WORDS

ARCHAEOLOGIST—A person who studies the life of early peoples.

CULTURE—The art, skills, customs and beliefs of a given people.

DIVERSITY—Difference; variety

ETHNIC—Having to do with a group of people sharing a common and distinct culture, religion, and language.

MYTH—A story or information that is untrue, but which many people believe out of ignorance and/or prejudice.

NATURAL RESOURCES—Valuable things that come from nature.

PRIMITIVE—Crude or simple; also, having to do with the earliest times.

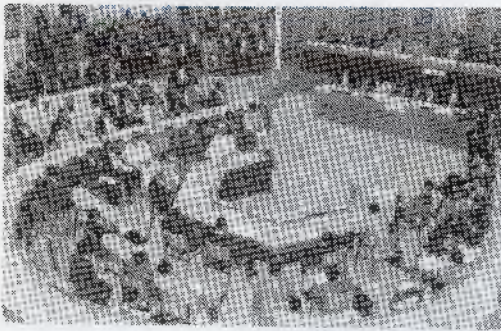
SAVAGE—A brutal or crude person.

TRADITIONAL—Of or pertaining to a custom or belief that is handed down from one generation to another.

UNCIVILIZED—Not cultured; brutal.

See page 32 in *Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa* for additional new words.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES



1. Make available to your students pictures of African people from different racial and ethnic groups and have them make a "Faces of Africa" collage.
2. Based on the information contained in *Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa*, have your students create a short play about the African continent and its people.
3. Have each student do research on one African country and prepare an oral report for an upcoming session.

Heads of state meet during a session of the Organization of African Unity, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

AFRICAN CONTINENT AND ITS PEOPLE EDUCATION PROJECT

POST TEST



Have your students write their answers to the following questions at the completion of this education project to measure their knowledge of the African continent and its people.

1. Where is Africa, how large is it, and how many countries are in it?
2. Describe Africa's geography and name some of its most famous geographical features.
3. Name three African countries, describe where they are and what natural resources they have.
4. What kind of people live in Africa?
5. Name and describe two things you like most about African culture.
6. What were some of the myths about Africa and what facts prove them untrue?
7. Name and describe two tragic events in the life of the African continent and its people.
8. Why is Africa called the "cradle" of civilization and what are some of the contributions Africa has made to the world?
9. Why are books like *Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa* important?
10. How has *Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa* affected your attitude about the African continent and its people, and what topics would you like to learn more about?



NEW BOOKS

The following books may be helpful resources:

Africa Adorned: A Panorama of Jewelry, Dress, Body Decoration, and Hairstyle by Angela Fisher (Abrams, 1984).

Africa & Africans by Paul Bohannon and Philip Curtin (Natural History Press, 1971).

African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations by J.C. deGraft-Johnson (reprinted by Black Classic Press, 1986).

The Africans: A Triple Heritage by Ali A. Mazrui (Little, Brown, 1986).

Afro-Bets® First Book About Africa by Veronica Freeman Ellis, illustrated by George Ford (Just Us Books, 1989).

Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire by Drusilla Dunjee Houston (reprinted by Black Classic Press, 1985).

Your students may enjoy the following books:

Abiyoyo (based on a South African lullaby and folk story), text by Pete Seeger, illustrations by Michael Hays (Macmillan, 1986).

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale by John Steptoe (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987).

Ntombi's Song by Jenny Seed, illustrations by Anno Berry (Beacon Press, 1989).

The Tale of Two Brothers: An Egyptian Fairy Tale translated from the Papyrus D'Orbiney by Charles E. Moldenke (reprinted by Black Classic Press, 1988).

The Village of Round and Square Houses by Ann Grifalconi (Little, Brown, 1986).



Credits and Information

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The mission of the Woodson Foundation is to research, preserve, perpetuate and celebrate the creative expressions, the cultural heritage, and the historic achievements of African-Americans through performances, exhibits and educational activities.